

Texas A&M University – Commerce  
THE HOLOCAUST: LIFE IN THE JEWISH GHETTOS  
Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 – 1:45 PM Room: SS150  
Donna Gosbee phone: 903-886-5317  
Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 10:00 – noon and 1:00 – 3:00

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PSCI 497-01E

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**Course Introduction:** Within the Holocaust was the creation of “ghettos” or isolated communities used to hold primarily Jews but sometimes other victims as well until the Nazis could deport them to extermination camps where they became victims of mass murder. This course will explore through lectures, presentations, readings from memoirs and other sources, as well as films, the differences and similarities of some of the thousands of ghettos which were established throughout Nazi-occupied Europe under the Third Reich. Within specific ghettos, the course will look at aspects of “daily life” for inhabitants in the ghetto, Jewish leadership, attempts at resistance and broader philosophical questions. The course will examine several of the larger ghettos in depth: Warsaw, Lodz, Vilna and Theresienstadt. We will also look at the ethical implications of the Judenrat, or Jewish Councils – Jewish men who were appointed by the Nazis to govern the ghettos, as well as the role of the Jewish ghetto police, who were participants in the roundup of Jews for deportation to the killing centers. The ghettoization period has been called “life in the interim.” The Jews and others were abruptly ripped from their normal patterns of daily life, and placed in the holding pens of the ghettos, awaiting almost certain death – either through disease or starvation within the ghetto or extermination at one of the killing centers created to complete the Final Solution.

*Please be warned: This course is an in-depth exploration of the very heart of human violence and evil – genocide. We will encounter the Jews and others as they experienced life in the ghettos on the eve of their destruction under the Third Reich. Living conditions in the ghetto were horrible and caused death for many even before the transports to the extermination camps began. For some students this class may be an excruciating and often emotionally distressful intellectual experience. Many of the images, readings and films you will experience are graphic in nature and deal with topics that can test the limits of our ability to understand. I have done my best to schedule the readings and assignments in a way that will give you time to process the material. Remaining in this course once you have received the syllabus is thus the academic equivalent of informed consent.*

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Students will have better knowledge and understanding of the various types of ghettos which were established by the Nazis.
2. Students will gain a better understanding of cultural, political and economic life of the various ghettos.
3. Students will work with and gain an understanding of various archival material which documents life within some of the ghettos.
4. Students will have a greater understanding of the moral issues and dilemmas that residents of the ghettos found themselves facing – the “choiceless choices” which they were forced to make.

## **Required Texts and Readings:**

**Kruk, Herman** (edited and introduced by Benjamin Harshav) 2002. *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939-1944*. Yale University Press. ISBN: 978-0-300-04494-2

**Sterling, Eric J.** (ed). 2005. *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust*. Syracuse University Press. ISBN: 978-0-815-60803-5

**Gutman, Israel.** 1994. *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*. Houghton Mifflin ISBN 978-0-395-90130-4

**Perechodnik, Calel.** (trans. Frank Fox). 1996. *Am I a Murderer?: Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman*. Westview. ISBN: 978-0-813-32702-0

**Sierakowiak, Dawid.** 1998. *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto*. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-195-12285-5

**Berkley, George E.** 2002. *Hitler's Gift: The Story of Theresienstadt*. Branden Pub. Co. ISBN: 978-0-828-32064-1

## **Assignments and Grades**

This course is reading and discussion intense – you cannot be a passive participant and expect to do well in this class. Additionally, you are expected to have read the assigned material before coming to class, because you are expected to make a valuable contribution to class discussions.

1. **Participation: 10 points.** Participation is a combination of attendance, reading the assigned materials prior to class, and your involvement in class discussions. You are expected to come to class prepared and ready to discuss the assigned readings for that day. This is the type of class where you might just end the class with more questions than you had the first day. **DO NOT BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS – IN FACT IT IS WELCOMED.**

2. **Reflection Papers: 5 points each, for a total of 35 points.** You are required to complete seven reflection papers throughout the course. See below for further detail regarding how to write your Reflection papers.

3. **Research paper on your selected topic: 25 points.** You are required to prepare a research paper of 10 - 12 pages in length on a topic related to the ghettos or their occupants. You may pick from the suggested topic list attached, or select one of your own, with my approval. There can only be one topic per student. Please send me an email when you have decided on your topic. You will be instructed to identify a different topic if another student has already chosen that topic. See further instructions below.

4. **Power Point or Prezi Presentation on your selected topic: 15 points.** Using information you provided in your research paper, you will complete a Power Point or Prezi presentation to be presented in class. Class presentations will occur the last two weeks of class, and are limited to no less than 12 minutes but no more than 15 minutes each. You must have prior approval of the topic to be presented, and the week before presentations start, you must meet with me to discuss progress on your project, as well as your research paper.

**5. Exams: 5 points each, for a total of 15 points.** There will be up to three scheduled exams during the semester. The exams will cover the most recent readings, therefore it is critical that you stay current on the assigned readings. However, if the instructor feels that assignments are being read and participation in class overall is adequate, there might be fewer exams required.

Grading Rubric:	90 - 100 = A
	80 - 89 = B
	70 - 79 = C
	60 - 69 = D
	<60 = F

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is mandatory and roll will be taken at every class.

**Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
Gee Library – Room 132  
Phone: (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

“All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” (See Student’s Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct).

Cell phones and iPods must be turned off and put away during class. You may take notes on a laptop or a tablet, but if you are found to be doing other tasks, i.e., Facebook or web-surfing, you will no longer be afforded the luxury of having your laptop on during class.

**Plagiarism. “What is Plagiarism? Many people think of plagiarism as copying another’s work or borrowing someone else’s original ideas. But terms like “copying” and “borrowing” can disguise the seriousness of the offense: According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to “plagiarize” means**

1. To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own.
2. To use (another’s production) without crediting the source
3. To commit literary theft
4. To present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

“In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else’s work and lying about it afterward. **But can words and ideas really be stolen?** According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is

protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyrighted protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, **by citing sources**. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to changing the words of an original source is not sufficient to prevent plagiarism. If you have retained the essential idea of an original source, and have not cited it, then no matter how drastically you may have altered its context or presentation, you have still plagiarized.” ([www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org)).

Academic dishonesty (plagiarism or cheating) will result in a zero grade for that particular assignment or exam. Should further dishonesty be displayed, the student will fail the class.

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

**As instructor, I reserve the right to amend, modify, or adjust this syllabus as appropriate.**

**Reading and Course Outline** (Subject to change by the instructor):

Jan. 20: Introduction – discussion of syllabus and expectations.

Jan. 22: Discussion: The Long and Winding Road of Antisemitism – In class film – *The Longest Hatred*.  
**Read before class: Hitler’s Speeches located on eCollege.**

Jan. 27 **Before Class look at:** <http://vishniac.icp.org/exhibition-sections/Lecture>: Jewish life before the Holocaust. You will look through five sections of this display from the photos of Roman Vishniac in the collection secured by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: The Introduction, Berlin Street Photography, Nazi Rise to Power, German-Jewish Relief Organizations, and Jewish Life in Eastern Europe.

**First Reflection Paper Due** - After looking at the Vishniac display on the USHMM website, consider those photos juxtaposed against the speeches of Adolf Hitler you read last week. Think of the words he used to describe Jews, and compare to the photos in the exhibit. How did the contrast make you feel? Also, look at the pictures of the Jews from Berlin,

and compare, contrast to the photos Vishniac took of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. What struck you about the contrast of the two?

Lecture: Jewish life in Europe before the Holocaust

In-class Film: *Image Before My Eyes*

- Jan. 29: Finish film: *Image Before My Eyes*  
Class Discussion of readings/films/photos—you are expected to participate.
- Feb. 3 Evolution of a persecuting society  
**Read before class: “Volksgemeinschaft, ‘Aryanization’ and the Holocaust,” by Avraham Barkai located on eCollege**
- Feb. 5 Rise of Nazism  
TOPICS FOR PRESENTATIONS MUST BE APPROVED .  
**Read for class: From eCollege – Judenrat – Introduction ( pages xi-xvii), 2<sup>nd</sup> introduction (xxxvii-xlvii) and Chapt. 2 (14-35)**
- Feb. 10 **EXAM # 1** – over what has been covered through Feb. 5. **Multiple choice and short answer (up to a paragraph).**
- Feb. 12 The Judenrat or Jewish Councils  
**Read for discussion in class from eCollege: *Judenrat* reading – Chapter 4 (pgs. 43-60), Chapter 12 (pgs. 317-331), Chapter 19 (pgs. 528-547) and Chapter 21 (570-575)**  
**Second Reflection Paper Due:** Discuss the ethical implications of having a Jewish Council in place to maintain order, in a place of death and destruction. Do you think they should have taken the positions? Do you see that they even had a choice? What about their compiling lists of Jews within the ghetto for deportation? These men not only had to create entirely new functioning municipalities, but they also had to try to feed the masses within the ghetto, while always working FOR the Nazi overlords. Give me your thoughts about their situation, and the ethics of their positions within the ghetto.  
Lecture: The Judenrat
- Feb. 17 Lecture: An overall view of the ghettos of the Third Reich  
**Reading assignment: Sterling book – read Foreword, Introduction, Chapter 4 (35 – 42), Chapter 8 (84 – 119) Chapter 9 (120-144) for discussion in class**  
**Third Reflection Paper Due:** John Roth begins his Foreword with a quote from Michael Berenbaum, “Death was a given. How to live in the interim was not.” The ghettos were part of this life in the interim. Roth talks about Herbert Bierhoff and his act of love toward his daughter in the Riga Ghetto. How does Roth judge Bierhoff? How do you judge Roth’s position? Roth alludes to Lawrence Langer’s definition of such situations

as “choiceless choices” –a kind of lose/lose situation. How do you think it would be possible to live life in the interim when one doesn’t know the outcome? Bring in some of your readings from Sterling’s book.

- Feb. 19 An overall view of the ghettos of the Third Reich  
**Read Sterling book–Chapter 11 (160–176), Chapter 12 (177–190)**  
Class discussion of the Sterling Book – you are expected to participate.
- Feb. 24 The Warsaw Ghetto:  
**Read for discussion in class: Gutman, *Resistance*, Introduction (10 pgs) and Chapter 1 (1-13), Chapter 6 (120-132) and Chapter 7 (133-145)**
- Feb. 26 The Warsaw Ghetto:  
**Read for discussion in class: Gutman, *Resistance*, Chapter 11 (201-259)**  
Start in-class film: “A Film Unfinished.”
- March 3 Remainder of in-class film: “A Film Unfinished”  
**Read assigned readings located on eCollege – identified as Ringelblum Section 1.**
- March 5 The Warsaw Ghetto  
**Read assigned readings located on eCollege – identified as Ringelblum Section 2.**  
**Fourth Reflection paper due:** Think about the life that Emmanuel Ringelblum and Gutman describe. How does one survive in a place of such abject poverty, hunger and disease and uncertainty? Bring in your observations from the film “A Film Unfinished.” What surprised you about the living conditions? Was Czerniakow, in your opinion right or wrong in ending his life instead of preparing the lists for deportation?
- March 10 The Hongkew Ghetto in Shanghai – Film: *Port of Last Resort*  
**Reading Assignment: Read Sterling, Chapter 7 (p 70-83)**
- March 12 **EXAM # 2** – multiple choice and short answer –questions will cover from the last exam forward.
- March 16 & 18 SPRING BREAK
- March 24 Lecture: The Lodz Ghetto:  
**Read Sierakowiak’s *Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak* for discussion in class this week.**

- March 26                    **Fifth Reflection Paper Due:** Write a reflection of your thoughts and observations on Sierakowiak’s diary. What moved you, surprised you or made an impression on you about his life and death in the ghetto?  
Start Film: “The Lodz Ghetto”
- March 31                    Finish watching “The Lodz Ghetto”
- April 2                      Lecture: The “model” ghetto of Theresienstadt.  
**Readings from *Hitler’s Gift: The Story of Theresienstadt* for discussion in class.** Read the prelude (8-13) Chapter 2, 3, 4 (27-78) and the Postlude (267-274)
- April 7                      Discussion on the Vilna Ghetto  
**Read Kruk’s book, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, Introduction by Benjamin Harshay (xxi- lli) and Chapters 1 (1-46) and Chapter 3 (100-123)**
- April 9                      Vilna Ghetto  
**Read Kruk’s book, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania* for discussion in class** (pages 278-279, 330-333, 430-437, 454-457, 480-483, 589-592, 692-705)  
**Sixth Reflection Paper Due:** Kruk does an amazing job of describing the confusion and danger of the Jews of Lithuania as the Nazis began occupation, and once ghettoized, the uncertainty of life. Write about the parts of his book that were most memorable to you – why those particular events stood out to you.
- April 14                    Attendance at Holocaust Awareness event (April 13, 14, 15) Rayburn Student Center
- April 16                    No class, but you must meet with me today regarding status of your research and presentation.
- April 21                    Discussion on Jewish Ghetto Police  
**Read portions of the book by Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?* for discussion in class – Read the Foreword, Preface and pgs. 1 – 101 and the Afterword - pgs. 213-225**  
**Seventh Reflection Paper:** Write a reflection on the Holocaust Awareness event you attended or the speaker you listened to. If you listened to a survivor, recap their experience and tell me what you thought of their narrative. How do their experiences compare with what we have read in class? What made the biggest impression on you regarding their talk.
- April 23                    **EXAM # 3** -multiple choice, short answer-covers from previous exam.

**Research papers are due – turn in during class.**

April 28	Presentations
April 30	Presentations
May 5	Presentations
May 7	Presentations

**Some ideas for presentation/research project topics**

These are simply some suggested topic ideas. If there is another topic you have an interest in, please talk to me about it. Topics MUST be approved by instructor by the third week of class. Your presentation (12-15 minutes) is based on information you compiled for your research paper.

Arrow Cross Party (Hungarian Fascists)  
Art of the Ghettos  
Bialystok Ghetto  
Children in the Ghetto  
The Gypsies of the Lodz Ghetto  
Illness/diseases within the Ghettos  
Immigration difficulties for Jews trying to escape  
Jewish Political Parties in the Ghettos  
Kimel, Alexander (Poet/Survivor)  
Korzczak, Janus and the Orphans of the Warsaw Ghetto  
Kovno Ghetto  
Krakow Ghetto  
Lvov Ghetto  
Maimonides' Principle – the Mishne Torah  
Memorialization of the Holocaust  
Music of the Ghettos  
Oneg Shabbat – Jewish Archive of Warsaw Ghetto  
Piotrkow Ghetto  
Poetry in the Ghettos  
Polish Socio-Economic Gains from Ghettoization of Jewish Population  
Resistance in the Ghettos  
Riga Ghetto  
Sexual Violence Against Women in the Ghettos  
Slave Labor in the Ghetto  
Spies, Gerty (Theresienstadt Ghetto survivor)  
Survivor testimony - you may locate a survivor testimony at the USC-Shoah Foundation website <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/login.aspx>. You will need to create a login id. The survivor must have lived in a ghetto. You will want to filter it to English language

interviews, and you can perform a search option if you want to select a specific ghetto. If you use the generic ghetto option, English speaking, there are almost 25,000 testimonies. The length varies – they are usually in segments of 30 minutes each – most are several hours long, and you need to listen to the entire interview. You will write of their experiences, and provide additional background for certain events, so it is not just a matter of listening to their testimony and writing a paper. You **MUST** bring in additional sources and research – remember your paper must be 10-12 pages. You can compare their observations to other diaries, interviews or narratives as well as to journal articles or books.

Tsvi Nussbaum (The Warsaw Ghetto Boy)  
Women's role in the Ghettos

### **Instructions for Reflection Papers:**

Reflection papers should be between 500 to 750 words – **PROVIDE WORD COUNT AT THE END OF THE PAPER.** Have your name and the date at the top of the first page (no cover page is necessary).

Papers are to be in Times New Roman, 12 point, double-spaced, one inch margins. If you are quoting something – you must footnote where the quote came from. You may bring outside sources into your reflection paper, but it is not necessary. The reflection papers are **YOUR** thoughts, feelings and observations about the particular topic based on your readings, the lecture and any other media provided in class or assigned.

I know in most papers, you are supposed to make your writing impersonal. These reflection papers are the exception. I want you to tell me your thoughts – therefore it is perfectly acceptable to use “I,” or “me” within your text.

I expect them to be well-written – proofread your document before handing it in.

Late Reflection Papers will not be accepted. They are due at the beginning of the class date assigned. If you are unable to attend class on a day when a reflection paper is due, you **MUST** submit it electronically before the time the class starts.

### **Instructions for Research Paper:**

Your research paper is substantially different than your Reflection papers. Please read these instructions carefully.

Use Times New Roman, 12 point, one inch margins, double spaced – your paper should be 10-12 pages, not including the cover page and bibliography. You should use footnotes for any citations within the body of your paper, and those citations should also appear in your bibliography.

A cover page and a complete bibliography must be included with the paper. If you are a Political Science major, you must use APSA format for your paper. You can find help with APSA questions at <https://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/Publications/APSASStyleManual2006.pdf> If you are a history major, you must use Turabian style formatting. All others should use MLA formatting. If you are quoting or paraphrasing, you MUST cite source as a footnote, otherwise you are plagiarizing someone else's work. No late papers will be accepted.

You should use only academic sources, i.e., peer-reviewed journal articles or books. If you are using a website, it must be a legitimate .org or .edu website – it cannot be quotes from blogs or other non-academic sources. All sources you use in gathering information for your research should be included in your bibliography – even if you use the source for information gathering, and do not specifically quote from it. I want to see what you looked at while compiling your research paper.

Proofread your paper carefully. I will be looking not only at the content, but how professionally you prepared your document. No matter how sound your research is, it detracts from your argument or thesis if the paper is poorly written, or full of typos or grammatical errors.

I encourage students who feel they might need additional help in their writing to come and see me during office hours, or visit the Writing Center which is available at no charge to all students in the Hall of Languages, Room 103. They also have an online writing center help, if you cannot meet with them face-to-face. Some information:

Submit a request for assistance to the Online Writing Lab (OWL) by sending an email to [writing.tamuc@gmail.com](mailto:writing.tamuc@gmail.com) Attach your paper to the email. In your email include: your name, the course for which you are writing, details about the assignment, questions you have about the assignment, and what you'd like the OWL consultant to look for specifically when reading your assignment.